

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 7, 2008

Newark Man Indicted for “Smash-and-Grab” Jewelry Store Robbery Spree

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NEWARK – A Newark man was federally indicted today in connection with a series of “smash-and-grab” jewelry store robberies committed at four shopping malls in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

Regaldo Hernandez, 26, was indicted on one count each of conspiracy to commit robbery, attempted robbery and receipt of stolen goods, and two counts of robbery. Hernandez has been detained without bail since his arrest on June 19, 2006, by Investigators with the Somerset County Prosecutor’s Office and Special Agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A federal criminal Complaint charging the defendant was signed on August 14, 2006.

The Indictment describes a conspiracy whereby Hernandez and others planned and participated in a series of smash-and-grab robberies of jewelry stores between July and September of 2003. According to the Indictment, Hernandez and others committed three such jewelry store robberies, taking jewelry with a total value of more than \$360,000. The robbers also attempted a fourth robbery, but fled prior to reaching the targeted jewelry store.

The Indictment alleges that on July 22, 2003, Hernandez and his co-conspirators stole a car and drove to the Garden State Mall in Paramus. Upon arrival, the co-conspirators ran into a Bailey, Banks & Biddle jewelry store and smashed display cases with sledgehammers. The robbers then took diamonds, rings, and watches valued at more than \$80,000 and fled to the waiting getaway car.

On August 3, 2003, Hernandez and his co-conspirators again stole a car and then drove to the Rockaway Town Square Mall in Rockaway, according to the Indictment. They ran into the mall armed with sledgehammers, but aborted the robbery before entering the Corbo Jewelers. The Indictment alleges that the group then drove to the King of Prussia Court Mall in Upper Merion Township, Pa., and rushed to the J.E. Caldwell Company jewelry store. Once at the store, they smashed display cases and removed Rolex watches valued at more than \$215,000 and fled in the stolen getaway car.

On September 28, 2003, Hernandez and his co-conspirators allegedly committed another smash-and grab robbery at Sherman & Sons Jewelers at the Bridgewater Commons Mall in Bridgewater. The co-conspirators took Tag Heuer and Rolex watches valued at more than \$65,000.

Currently, none of Hernandez’s co-conspirators have been arrested. The investigation by the FBI and U.S. Attorney’s Office is continuing.

Each count of conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery and attempted robbery carries a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, or twice the gross loss to any victim, or twice the gross gain to any defendant. The charge of receipt

of stolen goods carries a statutory maximum penalties of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000, or twice the gross loss to any victim, or twice the gross gain to any defendant.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Despite indictment, all defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun in Newark, and Investigators Somerset County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Wayne J. Forest, for the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott McBride, of the U.S. Attorney's Violent Crimes Unit in Newark.

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Defense Attorney: Linda D. Foster, Esq. Assistant Federal Public Defender